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SUBJECT: FINLAND CONTINUES TO SUPPORT U.S. IWC POSITION

REF: SECSTATE 56397

¶1. (SBU) Econoff delivered reftel demarche on the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to Mr. Esko Jaakkola, Finland's IWC representative in the Ministry of the Environment. Jaakkola said Finland will continue to support the consensus and position of like-minded nations during the IWC meeting. Specifically, Jaakkola expressed support for the U.S. position on the bowhead whale quota and the need for the Conservation Committee to limit the scope of its activities to areas outlined in its mandate, rather than further dilute its limited resources.

¶2. (SBU) While Jaakkola said U.S. intentions to move the Revised Management Scheme (RMS) forward were positive, he was pessimistic that real progress could be made due to the strong opposing viewpoints. Nevertheless, Finland intends to support reasonable measures to further the work of the RMS. Jaakkola said the U.S. was the only nation strong enough to offer the necessary leadership to break the current impasse.

¶3. (SBU) Finland resolved its financial obligation to the IWC on April 4, making it a member in good standing with full voting rights.

¶4. (SBU) According to Jaakkola, last October the EU sent a letter to member states claiming it should have the &community exclusive competence⁸ for whaling matters and that the common EU position should be voiced by the EU Presidency country. EU member states disagreed with the Commission's position; however, the member states did agree to coordinate closely on future IWC issues. For its part, Finland is nervous that a common EU position may water down the strength of the like-minded nations and it risks further alienating other like-minded nations such as those in Latin America. In addition to ad hoc coordination meetings, the EU will coordinate further its position during EU meetings one hour prior to the start of the general IWC sessions.

¶5. (SBU) Jaakkola is hopeful that Japan will soften its position during the upcoming IWC meeting on issues such as scientific whaling, potentially leading to real progress on RMS issues. Jaakkola understands that Nicaragua, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Belize might be modifying their position to closer align with the like-minded nations. In addition, new IWC countries such as Slovenia, Croatia and Cyprus will likely support the like-minded nations which should lead to a simple majority.

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